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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. U.S.-Israel Relations
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. Iran

Key stories in the media:

All media quoted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as saying

yesterday in a televised address that he had no wish to seek reelection through a presidential poll he called for January. Abbas blamed the stalemate in the peace talks on Israel and the U.S. HaQaretz reported that Abbas and his associates were particularly critical of the U.S. administration, which Abbas believes betrayed him. Media quoted Abbas associates as saying that Abbas may recant. Leading media surmised that jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti may eventually run in the PA Presidency race and that Israel may have to face him and Hamas.

Yediot reported that Israel is keeping mum about Abbas announcement. Israel Radio quoted Israeli Government officials as saying that Abbas' move was motivated by domestic considerations and that Israel does not intend to interfere in the matter. On the other hand, HaQaretz and other media reported that Israeli and American officials expressed concern over Abbas' announcement. President Shimon Peres telephoned Abbas on Wednesday night in an effort to persuade him to change his mind. HaQaretz reported that Peres told Abbas that he was worried that the decision would trigger political crisis in the PA, leading to a Hamas takeover in the West Bank. "If you leave the Palestinians would lose their chance for an independent state," Peres reportedly told Abbas. "The situation in the region would deteriorate. Stay, for the Palestinian people's sake," he was quoted as saying. HaQaretz reported that aides to PM Benjamin Netanyahu refused to comment on Abbas' statement, but that the PM has reportedly said in private meetings recently that it was in Israel's interest to have a strong Abbas who could advance the peace process. Yediot quoted Netanyahu as saying in private meetings that he appreciates Abbas. According to HaQaretz, Netanyahu made similar statements to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton a week ago, saying that it was in Israel's interest to strengthen Abbas as much as possible. HaQaretz quoted Netanyahu as saying a few days ago: "Of the existing alternatives, if we want an agreement with the Palestinians then Abbas is the best partner." Netanyahu reportedly said he was serious about the peace process with the Palestinians and was ready to take risks to advance peace, despite the PA leadership's impression to the contrary. HaQaretz quoted Netanyahu as saying: "The best partner is Abbas, but any Israeli intervention in internal Palestinian politics would only do harm." DM Ehud Barak added that he hoped Abbas' reluctance to run for reelection would not damage the attempt to resume the peace process. "It's important for both sides to adhere to the principle of negotiating to advance an arrangement," Barak said in a statement. HaQaretz quoted Barak as saying: "I suggest making every effort to reach a two-states-for-two-peoples arrangement, while preserving Israel's security interests," he was quoted as saying. Former Meretz leader Yossi Beilin as quoted as saying in an interview with Israel Radio that the remainder of Abbas' term should be used to conclude a final-status agreement.

HaQaretz quoted a senior U.S. official, speaking anonymously about the possibility of Abbas disappearing from the political scene, as saying: "There's a real crisis situation in the PA." HaQaretz reported that Clinton asked Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Wednesday and Arab foreign ministers she met in Morocco two days earlier to urge Abbas to remain in office and run for reelection.

Major media reported that today Israel rejected a U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) resolution urging an investigation into the Goldstone Report and condemned the world body vote as "completely detached from realities". In a statement, the Foreign Ministry said in response to yesterday's vote that Israel "maintains the right to self-defense" and would "continue to act to protect the lives of its citizens from the threat of international terrorism." The 192-member UNGA adopted the resolution Thursday by a vote of 114-18, with others absent or abstaining. The resolution calls on the Security Council to act if either side fails to launch credible investigations within three months. HaQaretz's Web site reported that the harshly worded U.N. draft resolution, composed by Arab member states, has not been softened despite U.S. and European efforts. Israel's Ambassador to the U.N., Gabriella Shalev, told HaQaretz before the vote that she did not plan to take part. "I won't lend a hand to a debate whose conclusions are predetermined. It was a predictable Arab game." The draft resolution includes a demand for the Israeli Government to carry out an "independent and credible" internal investigation of its own conduct during Israel's three-week offensive in Gaza, which left over 1,000 Palestinians dead. Hamas is not mentioned by name in the UN draft resolution.

Instead, it calls on the "Palestinian side" to carry out an investigation into the Goldstone report findings that relate to Palestinians. The draft resolution also includes a recommendation to convene the signatories of the fourth Geneva Convention treaty for an emergency session to discuss Israel's violations of the treaty. Apart from Israel and the U.S., a number of European countries including Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and the Czech Republic voted against the resolution. But the European Union was split, with others including Britain and France abstaining. Most developing countries voted in favor. Media reported that Israel's Deputy Ambassador Daniel to the U.N. Daniel Carmon told the assembly that the resolution "endorses and legitimizes a deeply flawed, one-sided and prejudiced report of the discredited Human Rights Council and its politicized work that bends both fact and law." HaQaretz quoted U.S. Deputy Ambassador to the U.N. Alejandro Wolff as saying that the resolution was flawed in several respects, including its failure to name the Hamas militant movement that rules Gaza. He also said a demand for international supervision of any Israeli and Palestinian investigations was "unhelpful." HaQaretz reported that IDF Advocate General Maj. Gen. Avihai Mandelblit has already instructed the army to investigate the claims of the Goldstone Report.

The Jerusalem Post and Yediot quoted the Prime Minister's Office as saying that no formal meeting with President Obama has yet been scheduled for PM Netanyahu, who leaves for Washington on Sunday. Yediot quoted senior sources in Washington as saying that Netanyahu should continue to sweat. The daily's Shimon Shiffer commented that the White House is hazing Netanyahu.

Major media reported that yesterday, in the wake of Israel's interception of the Iranian arms-laden Francop cargo ship, PM Benjamin Netanyahu accused Iran of "war crimes" and called on the U.N. to investigate it instead of Israel for attacking innocent civilians. The "sole objective" of these Iranian weapons, Netanyahu said, "was to attack and kill as many civilians -- women, children and the elderly -- as possible. This is a war crime." "The UN General Assembly, which is meeting today, should investigate, discuss and condemn [the Iranian shipment]. This is a war crime that should prompt the U.N. Security Council to convene in special session, especially since it was in gross violation of UN Security Council resolutions," Netanyahu said. "This is what the international community should concentrate on at all times -- but especially today. But instead, they have chosen to assemble and condemn the IDF and Israel, and to try and undermine our legitimate right to defend ourselves," Netanyahu stated. The PM added that the IDF was a moral army of the highest caliber. "We know that it is the IDF and Israel's security services that stand against the war criminals who plan to perpetrate war crimes against Israeli citizens. I think that the time has come for the international community, at least its more responsible countries, to recognize the truth and not promote a lie," Netanyahu said. The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel's envoys overseas were instructed to urge their host countries to cease all dealings with Iran's state shipping company, the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines -- IRISL -- which shipped the weapons from Iran to Egypt, in containers marked with its logo. Britain last month barred all such dealings. The media reported that in spite of the Israeli PR effort, international and even American media gave relatively minor coverage to the ship seizure. State-run Iran TV said in a commentary that the "Israeli propaganda" was aimed at diverting attention from allegations of Israeli war crimes in Gaza. A Syrian Foreign Ministry official expressed the same view. Iran's English-language Press TV said FM Manouchehr Mottaki had dismissed the allegations on the cargo's destination and route. The Jerusalem Post quoted Ghassan Khatib, a spokesman for Abbas's government, as saying: "Since the Israeli leadership and society are not ready for peace, they are using any pretext to shun peace obligations, and one is the issue of the Iranian shipment." Yesterday Hizbullah denied any links to the shipment -- as Syria had done on Wednesday, when its Foreign Minister Walid Muallem accused Israel of "piracy." In a statement faxed to the AP on Thursday, Hizbullah said it "categorically denies" any connection to the weapons. It also called Israel's actions "piracy."

HaQaretz reported that President Obama has promised the Palestinian leadership that there will be no change to U.S. policy on the issue of Jerusalem, and that East Jerusalem does not constitute part of

Israel. As such, any Israeli construction in East Jerusalem, like in the West Bank, is illegal. According to HaQaretz, this promise was meant to resolve the crisis of confidence between President Abbas and the U.S., and remove his threat to resign from political life. HaQaretz recorded that two weeks ago the U.S. administration asked Abbas and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to stop the reconciliation talks between Fatah and Hamas. The Americans announced that if a Palestinian unity government is set up that would include Hamas, the U.S. would have to cease its financial aid to the PA.

Maariv (Shmuel Rosner) tells the Qfull story behind [recent] U.S.-Israel relations,Q including a reported meeting between President Obama and Saudi King Abdullah, which allegedly changed the PresidentQs opinion that Israel should be kept in check. Rosner reported that U.S. Special Envoy Senator George Mitchell told one of his acquaintances that President Abbas is the last of his concerns. Reminded by RosnerQs friend that Abbas insists on refusing to talk with Netanyahu without a full freeze in settlement construction, Mitchell reportedly answered that he will have no choice but to negotiate with Israel.

The Jerusalem Post headlined an article on the current perception of President Obama among the American public: QAmericans Want Results, not Symbolism, from Obama.

HaQaretz cited a report [on International Religious Freedom] from the State Department according to which Israel dismally fails the requirements of a tolerant pluralistic society: despite boasting religious freedom and protection of all holy sites, Israel falls short in tolerance toward minorities, equal treatment of ethnic groups, openness toward various streams within society, and respect for holy and other sites. The comprehensive report, written by the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, says Israel discriminates against groups including Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Reform Jews, Christians, women, and Bedouin. The report says that the 1967 law on the protection of holy places refers to all religious groups in the country, including in Jerusalem, but "the Government implements regulations only for Jewish sites. Non-Jewish holy sites do not enjoy legal protection under it because the Government does not recognize them as official holy sites." The report makes it clear that practices that have become routine in Israel are considered unacceptable in enlightened countries and should be corrected. Among other examples, the report notes that more than 300,000 immigrants who are not considered Jewish under rabbinical law are not allowed to marry and divorce in Israel or be buried in Jewish cemeteries. The paper advertised a fuller read-out of the report in its upcoming Sunday edition.

HaQaretz does not expect many people to join the QDemocratic Scene (freely translated) -- the circle formed by the Labor Party Qrebels,Q which will convene for the first time on Sunday. Shalom Yerushalmi of Maariv expects the group to drive yet another nail in the Labor PartyQs coffin and demand the partyQs division.

HaQaretz reported that on Thursday the first part of a new five-acre memorial plaza for the September 11, 2001 attacks will be unveiled in JerusalemQs Arazim Valley in the Ramot neighborhood. The newspaper notes this will be the first 9/11 memorial with names outside the U.S.

The Jerusalem Post reviewed a new book by Allis Radosh and Ronald Radosh: QA Safe Heaven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel. The newspaper says that TrumanQs example should inspire President Obama in his quest for Middle East peace.

The media reported that the annual rally in memory of the late PM Yitzhak Rabin, which was delayed because of the weather, will take place tomorrow night at Rabin Square in Tel Aviv.

1. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Block Quotes:

1. QHalf a Meeting

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/6): QI'm guessing that in the end there will be a meeting [between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu]. It will take place because not having it will depict Netanyahu as the victim and Obama as the enemy of Israel. That would damage Obama in the Jewish community, damage that he can less and less afford. Should it take place, the meeting will not meet the role it was assigned. It will be forced, coerced. It will not give Netanyahu an opportunity to clean the slate, to turn over a new leaf, to create trust, to build intimacy. Relations are cloudy, admit sources on both sides. There is mutuality in this crisis, there is symmetry: Obama is convinced that Netanyahu stuck a knife in his back; Netanyahu is convinced that Obama is the one who stuck the knife. Above this troubling story, which has still not turned into headlines, hovers a cloud of failure. The Obama administration failed abysmally in the strategic step it took, which was meant to turn the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians into the engine that would bring the entire region under America's wing, from the Mediterranean Sea to the edges of Afghanistan. His failure is liable to ultimately be our disaster. Ironically, the only ray of light at the moment is the activity relating to Iran. Netanyahu is sure that he knows who is to blame: White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel. He heard inside information, from the White House, verified information. Emanuel drips venom. My sources may be less good, but the picture they paint is different. Netanyahu's problem, they say, is not Emanuel. It is Obama.

II. QObama Needs Us

Editor-in-Chief Amnon Lord wrote in the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (11/6): QThe Obama administration needs Israel and Benjamin Netanyahu to provide some response on the narrow front of American politics. The Palestinians make it easy for Prime Minister Netanyahu to sound and look positive regarding the Qpeace process, as he expresses his willingness to enter negotiations at once.... [In the Iranian arena,] Netanyahu has presented a positive position regarding the agreement to transfer enriched uranium [sic] to Russia and France. This is excellent, particularly as Iran announced a few hours later that it is rejecting the proposed accord.

III. QWhat Are American Jews Good for?

Jewish affairs correspondent Anshel Pfeffer wrote in Ha'aretz (11/6): QWhy don't we all grow up? We are brothers and sisters. But we live in different neighborhoods, on separate continents. [American and Israeli] Jews can all be proud of their incredible success stories and are all facing enormous challenges. We should try and help each other out, without expecting much gratitude, but ultimately we all have to deal with our own troubles. American Jews are doing themselves a disservice by mistaking Israel's problems for their own.

2. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

1. QThe Bitterest Deadlock

Editor-in-Chief David Horowitz wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (11/6): QGetting Obama alongside Meretz on the Israeli political spectrum, as I did in this column last week, misrepresents the thrust of his administration's policies regarding the Palestinians. Broadly speaking, indeed, it seems reasonable to acknowledge that a fairer sitting might have been closer to the flexible Olmert's Kadima Q although the administration's forceful calls for a complete freeze to include east Jerusalem and the settlement blocs would not have sat easily even with Olmert. Whatever the respective attitudes to a permanent accord, however, the sorry truth for now is that the U.S., for all its energetic diplomacy, cannot so much as get the players back into the same room. Indeed, that full freeze demand, including east Jerusalem, has proven as counterproductive as critics, this columnist included, predicted the U.S. took a position that even the much-moderated Netanyahu was never going to accept, a position that

raised Palestinian expectations. While Abbas has been arguing that he can hardly come back to the peace table under terms less advantageous than those the U.S. was attempting to impose on its ally Israel, Washington has been searching, so far in vain, for a means to help him down from the tree. Now Abbas may be gone for good.

II. QPolitical Foil

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (11/6): QSeveral weeks ago Israel embarked on a mission to politically foil the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas. The man who was a favorite of Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert became, in the age of Benjamin Netanyahu, a dangerous rival.... Netanyahu celebrated a diplomatic victory: the U.S. administration pulled back from its efforts to resume negotiations and the blame fell on the Palestinians. Netanyahu told the Americans that he could not comprehend the Palestinian refusal. The Prime Minister is of the opinion that the Palestinians are prisoners of a notion that the current Israeli government is unwilling to compromise, instead of giving it a chance. Netanyahu's temporary victory may prove to be a defeat for Israel if Abbas carries out his threat to resign from politics. Then there will really be no one to talk to, and Israel will find itself exposed against Hamas and the initiative for the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian independent state, or an imposed agreement. Like Netanyahu, President Obama is also not pleased, as is reflected by his efforts to avoid a meeting with Netanyahu, who is due in Washington next week.

III. QCrying QWolf

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz (11/6): QDespite international calls for him to stay on, from the moment Abbas demanded an immediate and total freeze of construction in the settlements as a condition for negotiations, he brought the negotiating track to a dead end. The Palestinian President misread the diplomatic map in believing that the Americans would stick to their initial firm demands for a construction freeze. Abbas has portrayed himself as the only Palestinian partner for peace. He threw down the gauntlet to that effect on the White House lawn, but he could find himself paving the road for the opponents of peace while his gauntlet lies abandoned in Obama's front yard.

IV. QWe Will Miss Abbas Yet

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/6): QThe present situation between Israel and the Palestinians is both ridiculous and paradoxical simultaneously. On the one hand, the present Israeli government is not building in the settlements. Period.... Meanwhile, a senior American official underscored this by saying: in fact, there is a clear understanding between Israel and the United States on a total freeze for a nine month period. The problem is that this cannot be openly declared. Netanyahu has to go for a freeze quietly. As far as Abu Mazen is concerned, silence is rubbish.... Bibi explained last week to Knesset Member Daniel Ben Simon, who had just come from meeting Abu Mazen in Morocco, the extent to which the Palestinians do not want him, and are attempting to topple him. The congratulations for this impossible predicament ought to be sent to the U.S. administration, which has put on an inept performance here, particularly by placing all parties on high limbs from which it is now impossible to descend unharmed. Rahm Emanuel, George Mitchell, and Hillary Clinton have been shown to be complete amateurs. As of now, everything is in stagnation. Abu Mazen has announced that he is not interested in running for reelection. On the other hand, who knows.... The ball is now in the American court. A presidential act of leadership is necessary to get this cart out of the mud and running. However, Barack Obama now appears to be anything but a strong leader. A year has already passed since his election, and we remain with the hope and its shattered pieces.

13. Iran:

Block Quotes:

QUs, Them, and Obama

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (11/6):
QPresident Barack Obama noted the [30th] anniversary [of the seizure
of the American Embassy in Tehran] by saying, QIran must choose. We
have heard for 30 years what the Iranian government is against; the
question, now, is what kind of future it is for.Q But this is a
question the President, who this week marked the anniversary of his
own election, cannot reasonably forever ask.... We close out the
week on a glimmer of hope -- the certainty that evil regimes don't
have to last forever. Next week marks the fall of the Berlin Wall
which led to the collapse of the Soviet Empire. If only Barack
Obama could walk in the footsteps of John F. Kennedy (QIch bin ein
BerlinerQ) and Ronald Reagan ("Tear down this wall!"), and provide
the moral leadership the civilized world needs to help the people of
Iran take down this regime.

CUNNINGHAM